

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES
ON RURAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

This submission is tendered on behalf of millions of Australians who until recently felt we were an almost voiceless community. We are 'die-hards' from an era when moral fortitude was considered a far greater thing than economic expediency. It has been with growing disappointment that we see the deterioration of our Australian culture descending into the 'dog eat dog' world of today's commercial, political and social slurry. Those of us with the opportunity have made a point of learning about the world we live in, we are a naturally curious and questioning people and love to travel. Very few of us arrive at any other conclusion than that we live in the 'best' country in the world, for a variety of reasons. Sadly, with all of the advantages that we have enjoyed in the past, this may not be so for very much longer due to that most common of human frailties, greed.

The issue of Live Animal Export has finally given us a reason to rouse ourselves on behalf of an absolutely voiceless community in protest and we have been heard. The statements elicited from various politicians with vested interests would be laughable if they were not so offensive. Comments such as "we are depriving starving Indonesians" and "we must respect their religion" and "they have inadequate refrigeration" are some of the most ridiculous things I have heard from apparently thoughtless politicians.

Our expansion of understanding of the so-called animal kingdom has led to the knowledge that our animals have just as much 'right' to share the world with us as any other being. They have fed us, clothed us, groomed our land for us and kept us company forever. Anyone with any knowledge and conscience knows that ALL animals are sentient in their own way. They feel pain, fear, security, well-being and panic just like the rest of us and not recognising that is akin to visiting a foreign country and yelling, because the natives do not speak your language. It is our privilege to be the highest (questionably) order of animal and as such it is our responsibility to act as guardians towards all others. This has been a learning process and there is no reason why our learning should be thrown aside because another country or culture does not agree.

We have organisations like Animals Australia and the RSPCA because human nature is so varied in its manifestations that we need somebody looking over the shoulders of those dealing with animals, somebody representing their interests, right here at home. How on earth can any of our standards be enforced in a foreign country, with differences at all levels of culture. And why should they? By what right? I would be delighted if any foreign country wanted us to teach them how we've arrived at our standards but I doubt the effect, their journeys have been different, and I am sure they believe that their ways are quite acceptable.

Rather than dwelling on each individual point to justify this stance on Live Export, because it is a big, complex argument, let me just say that it is with absolute conviction that we know it must be banned. I have many friends who live on the land and I know that they have no trouble with this stance. I regret that the farmers who leapt onto the Live Export Gravy Train have had little support from MLA, surely this eventuality is exactly within their domain.

There have been many decisions made by our government which we would have liked to decide by referendum but the issue of Live Export has been simmering for some time and a message has now been sent that we will not settle for anything less than a total ban. What a surprising country and people! Please heed us.

Mrs Sue Teakle.